

**TESTIMONY OF THE  
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE  
  
BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND  
FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE  
  
IN OPPOSITION TO L.D. 1102**

**“RESOLVE, ESTABLISHING THE COMMISSION TO STUDY THE NEEDS,  
OPPORTUNITIES AND EFFICIENCY ASSOCIATED WITH THE PRODUCTION OF  
SALMONID SPORT FISH IN MAINE”**

**SPONSORED BY:** Representative BLACK of WILTON

**CO-SPONSORED BY:** Senator SAVIELLO of FRANKLIN  
Representative HILLIARD of BELGRADE  
Representative HOBART of BOWDOINHAM  
Representative MAREAN of HOLLIS  
Representative WOOD of SABATTUS  
Senator BURNS of WASHINGTON

**DATE OF HEARING: May 12, 2015**

Good afternoon Senator Davis, Representative Shaw and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Michael Brown, Fisheries Division Director at the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking on behalf of the Department, in opposition to **L.D. 1102**.

Maine is known among its peers as having one of the best fish hatchery systems in the Northeast. There are several reasons for this, including strict importation standards, the variety of species we raise, a history of disease free facilities and the support they receive from this committee and the public.

**L.D. 1102** is a resolve to reestablish a Commission to study the needs, opportunities, and efficiency associated with the production of salmonid sport fish in Maine. LD 1102 is not a new concept, in fact many of the topics this resolve seeks to address continue to be important to the production of salmonid fishes at our state hatcheries. Because our eight hatcheries play such an integral role in Maine’s outdoor economy they have been a focus of a number of previous studies, surveys and commissions all dedicated to ensuring that these facilities continue to produce quality hatchery products that meet the needs of people angling in Maine.

The latest Commission established in 1999 was comprised of 13 members who worked together for four years, met fifteen times and produced a final report in November 2002 which comprehensively reviewed salmonid fish production operations and provided recommendations to the Department.

With the findings of the latest Commission and the concurrent results of a “Comprehensive Statewide Fish Hatchery System Engineering Study” completed by FishPro consultants, the Department was poised for the successful voter approval of a 7-million dollar bond for hatcheries in November 2002. An additional 2-million dollars of additional bond funding came with a bond approved in June 2008 furthering this effort.

The efforts of the past Commission and funding provided through these bond initiatives of 2002 and 2008 have allowed the Department to increase production from 216,100 pounds in 2001 to 399,852 pounds in 2014. While we have not been able to achieve the goal of 865,077 pounds recommended by the 2002 Commission we have been able to maintain the proportions in terms of numbers of fish stocked.

The 2002 Commission worked with the Department to identify and address many of the issues that constrained the Department’s hatchery system in the early 2000’s. Several of these issues were addressed through the installation of the effluent treatment facilities at four of our eight hatcheries. These improvements brought the Department into compliance with water quality standards at several of the facilities and this allowed us to increase production. We continue to seek opportunities to increase production at West Grand, Dry Mills and New Gloucester and Governor Hill, though at all of these locations options are limited.

The Commission spent a considerable amount of time focused on which species the Department should raise and how to raise these fish at lower costs. These issues are just as valid today as they were during the previous Commission. We continue to recognize that there are various user groups that fish in Maine and that these groups have different expectations of our fisheries resources. We continue to utilize public input from the public contact fisheries biologists have while conducting fisheries surveys, through public surveys, working groups, this committee, and others to help guide the species and numbers of fish we stock each year. We operate within the constraints of protecting wild fish populations, stocking fish of appropriate sizes, balancing open waters and ice fishing opportunities and providing opportunities for children. We will continue to engage the public, sporting groups, anglers, sporting camps and others as we develop our stocking programs.

The Department has, and will continue to engage and remain open to utilizing private hatcheries to assist in raising fish. The issues of fish health, disease testing, size standards, or the physical condition of the fish we raise with our partners will be important as we assess opportunities to partner. In the past we developed successful partnership with a northern Maine hatchery to raise Arctic char as part of a special three year project to reintroduce fish after reclaiming Big Reed and Wadleigh ponds.

The Department has worked diligently to implement all of the past Commission’s recommendations within the constraints placed on the Department, including environmental concerns and compliance with environmental standards for Maine waters.

I would be willing to answer any questions you have now or at the work session.